

# *Horticulture Northwest*

Journal of the Northwest Ornamental Horticultural Society



*Iris reticulata* x 1

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# Horticulture Northwest

Volume 11    Number 1  
Spring    1984

*Sallie D. Allen, Editor*

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Cover Illustration:  
Iris reticulata  
Mike Lee





# Notes From the Sikkim Expedition

1

Barry N. Starling, Essex, England

(Extracts taken from a letter to your Editor. Barry Starling was the leader and coordinator of the two Sikkim explorations which took place in June and September of 1983. NOHS contributed financially to the trek and has already received new and exciting seeds, much of which appears in this year's Seed Exchange.)

Sorry I have not written sooner to let you know how we got on on our first trip to Sikkim. There has been so much to do assessing our findings and making plans for the next stage of the expedition. Keshab Pradhan's advice to us to explore W. Sikkim during the monsoon season paid off. The flowers were abundant, and although we were shocked to discover when we arrived at Darjeeling that our permits had been reduced to 15 days, we ultimately negotiated an extension which allowed us to complete our survey.

Daku Tenzing, the wife of Tenzing of Everest, was recommended by Keshab to organize our trek into the mountains, and she proved to be very efficient... it was largely due to her that our first visit was a success and she and Tenzing are working hard to get us permission for a longer stay in September.

We collected over 300 specimens of plants in flower for the Kew herbarium and there are many, many more to come, some only just popping through the ground. Much to my regret, we did not get to the glacier margins at 16,000 feet to find *Diplarche* or *Diapensia himalaica*. I hope we shall do that next time. The weather ranged from wet to very wet and although we reached nearly 16,000 feet towards the Goechi la Pass, snow that had freshly fallen prevented us getting to the pass.

We soon got used to the altitude, but Brian Mathew suffered throughout with dysentery and spent the first week after our return in the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases. Poor Brian has still not fully recovered and suffers discomfort after each meal. The doctors say it could take two months to clear, but in spite of this, Brian kept on his feet most of the time and has even been able to work on identifying the specimens since our return.

It was unbelievable to see square mile after square mile of rhododendron forest and then rhododendron moorland with great drifts of *Primula obliqua* and *P. calderiana* growing beneath. We have marked some very good *Rhododendron lanatum* and *R. cinnabarinum*, also a fabulous crimson *R. hodgsonii* such as none of us had seen in cultivation. This I climbed into and self-pollinated the flowers of the three trusses I could reach as the other *R. hodgsonii* around were not very exciting. Higher up it was all *R. anthopogon*, *R. setosum* and *R. lepidotum* and in just one spot at our highest point, *R. nivale* in low, tight hummocks. The only *lepidotums* in flower were the little yellow ones, but we did find one purple just as we were about to descend. The *R. setosum* were fantastic! I have only seen a poor lilac in cultivation, but we found rich, deep purples, bright crimsons and rose pinks, also three to four-inch high forms at high altitude. The *anthopogons* bring into serious question both

Davidian and Cullen and Chamberlain's descriptions.\* They divide *R. anthropogon* and *R. hypenanthum* on the basis of the former having pink or red flowers and the latter having yellow, cream or white flowers. The Sikkim *anthopogons* must be at the meeting point of the two, for although the habit and the foliage was pretty uniform, the flowers ranged from white to pink, apricot, peach, yellow, amber, cream and some had delightfully silvered upper leaf surfaces.

Tucked into the shade of rhododendron thickets and then later shaded by boulders close to the high ridges was *Bergenia purpurascens*, a dainty cousin of the "Elephant's Ears" of the winter garden. This had rounded, crimson-flushed leaves of up to three inches in diameter topped by dainty heads of rose-red bells. Often accompanying this in among the thickets was a plant which at first appearance resembled a vigorous clump of *cypripedium* or even *veratrum* leaves. Shortly, we found it in flower -- and what a surprise. This was a gentian, an enormous gentian with huge yellow, green-marked trumpets three inches long and two inches wide at the mouth.

*Cassiope fastigiata* was everywhere like heather mainly like the Nepal form with red calyx and pink staining deep inside the corolla. Mike Upward found one isolated plant which was totally white with light green calyx, a good compact grower. This we christened "Mike's White" and brought back cuttings. We have marked it and will go back for seed and cuttings or divisions on our next trip.

*Gaultheria tricophylla* had red, tubby little bells unlike the longer flowered pink and white that is mostly seen in cultivation. *G. pyrolloides* was flowering just two inches high with deep pink bells. Both of these survived the 40 hours of tropical heat that it took to get from Darjeeling to London and, incidentally, the six weeks of hot drought since we came back. *Vaccinium retusum* and *V. nummularia* were in the 10-11,000 foot belt which makes them marginally hardy. We shall collect seed of these as high as possible when we go back. One exciting find as a rhododendron species new to Sikkim, *Rhododendron micromeres* which has only previously been found as far west as eastern Bhutan. This was a good deep yellow, but on a gawky plant in dense forest. Maybe in the open it will make a more compact plant. This, too, is doubtfully hardy.

Two leguminous plants stopped us dead in our tracks. *Chesneya nubigena* grew with *Cassiope* on peaty banks in one place and then in pure, deep beds of glacial grit in another. Here it made almost flat silvery-green pancakes covered with light and dark rosy-crimson, pea-flowers. If we can raise seed and establish it, this will be new to cultivation. The other legume was *Gueldenstadtia himalaica* -- an ugly name for a delightful plant. Though of the pea-family, the flowers resembled violets and were deep violet in colour, completely covering broad, one-inch high mats of dark green leaves. This we found in the Bikbari Valley, to the west of our main route -- an area which has probably never been explored botanically before.

High on the pass leading to the Bikbari Valley were just a few tiny plants of the legendary *Primula sapphirina*, a perfect little *Soldanelloid* barely two inches high with shyly nodding, soft violet-rose bells on cotton-thin stems from half-inch wide rosettes.

\*Cullen and Chamberlain have *R. hypenanthum* as a subspecies of *R. anthropogon*, but still use colour as one distinguishing characteristic.



Sinister looking arisaemas were mainly confined to the high forest, but two species ventured onto the open alpine moorland. *Arisaema propinquum*, with chocolate and white striped hood and tripartite leaf looked like a huge slug with an umbrella held high, peering from behind boulders or squinting through the lower branches of juniper or dwarf rhododendron. The petite, slender, pale green flowers of *A. jaquemontii*, however, had the grace of a mountain nymph and pleased the eye, unlike its ugly sisters.

Other exciting finds were two lilies, forms of *Lilium nanum*, *Fritillaria cirrhosa*, three lloydias, two rich blue species of *Corydalis*, one akin to *C. cashmeriana*\* and two yellow *Corydalis*, androsaces, saxifrages, etc. A tight little silver bun plant has been identified as *Tanacetum gossipinum* and a neat little rosette with yellow flowers which we all thought was a gesneriad is *Oreosolon wattii*. I could go on and on about these treasures, but must try to catch today's last mail.

\*And now identified as *C. ecristata*.



#### A PACIFIC NORTHWEST WELCOME TO:

Dr. Barbara Smit-Spinks, who has joined the faculty of the Center for Urban Horticulture as Assistant Professor of Horticultural Physiology. A native of South Dakota, Doctor Smit-Spinks did her undergraduate degree at South Dakota State University, and completed her Ph.D. degree from the University of Minnesota in Fall of 1983. At the Center, she will advise graduate students, develop a research program on the physiology of landscape plants growing in cities, and will teach a course on the same subject. In addition, she will have responsibilities of developing the laboratories in the new headquarters building of the Center. Her husband, Tom, has an M.S. degree in agricultural economics and expects to find work in economic statistics. The Smit-Spinks are recent parents of Aaron, born in December 1983.



#### NOHS HORTICULTURAL EDUCATION FUND

The members of the board wish to express their personal appreciation to those responsible for recent generous contributions to our Horticultural Educational Fund. Thank you specifically to Mr. Henry Isaacson, Jr. for the grant from the Seattle Foundation; to Mrs. Walter Wyckoff for her contribution; to Mrs. Corydon Wagner for a contribution from the R.D. Merrill Foundation; and to Mrs. Garrett Horder and Mrs. Philip Duryee who were responsible for the contribution from the Clise Agency.

We are entering 1984 with strong support representing over \$60,000 towards our goal of \$100,000. Presently, the annual interest from this fund will provide us with a substantial income for furthering our educational program. We hope many of you will want to add your gift and make that day come sooner.



## Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium

The Center for Urban Horticulture at the University of Washington has received a major gift to support construction and furnishing of the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium of Horticultural Plants. The gift was announced at the Board of Regents meeting on January 20.

The Hyde Herbarium will be part of the Center's new headquarters building now under construction at Union Bay. The gift provides for construction of the 1,000 square foot herbarium space, special cases to store the collection, equipment for preparing specimens, and furnishings for users of the collection.

The gift recognizes the many horticultural interests of Otis Douglas Hyde. Mrs. Hyde, a resident of Tacoma, has served on the Board of Directors of the Northwest Ornamental Horticultural Society, the Arboretum Foundation, and the Rhododendron Species Foundation. She has been a member of the Master Gardeners' Program since it began in Pierce County, and has also been active in the Garden Club of America and the Tacoma Garden Club.

Mrs. Hyde's serious interest in horticulture, she says, dates from numerous Arboretum courses and continuing education classes she took at the University of Washington. Especially stimulating, she recalls, were three courses taught by C. Leo Hitchcock, now Professor Emeritus of Botany. These and other courses opened up a new field of interest for Mrs. Hyde, a magna cum laude graduate of the University of Washington with an M.A. in Sociology from the University of Chicago.

A herbarium is a collection of dried plant specimens that are uniformly mounted, arranged by botanic classification, and annotated as to season and site of growth. The Hyde Herbarium will be the only such collection in the entire region to emphasize cultivated plants growing in the Northwest. A fundamental tool of research in plant materials, it will also serve as the "library" of plant collections in the Washington Park Arboretum and the Bloedel Reserve, both administered through the Center for Urban Horticulture.

The Herbarium will be one of the focal points of the 12,000 square foot, \$1.2 million headquarters building that the Center will occupy in late spring. The Herbarium will be used, not only by faculty and students of the Center, but also by visiting scholars and researchers and by the large horticultural community of Puget Sound.



Don't be hasty in digging up tender or treasured plants which may have been blasted by last December's unusual cold, advises Betty Miller. This knowledgeable Seattle horticulturist suggests that while top growth may have been killed, the roots may still be healthy. Removing the damaged portions of the plant and then waiting for as long as two years may be rewarded by a vigorous "new" plant. Patience, advises Betty, is often the best remedy.





# Oxon Pond Botanic Park

Bernard S. Jackson, Director  
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

## Growing Newfoundland Ericaceae

The Canadian Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is the home of 31 species of Ericaceae, with another fifteen or more wild varieties or forms represented. In addition, there must be countless exotic members of this family that could be grown and that would thrive in this most easterly corner of North America. Despite this, there are not, as far as I know, any serious growers of this family in the whole area.

It was partly because of this, partly because of the value of these plants as garden subjects and partly because of their inherent ability to thrive and create beauty under our climatic conditions, that the Memorial University of Newfoundland first started its peat beds in its young but growing Botanical Garden. Since I have been intimately associated with the Garden and its peat beds since their inception, I thought that some of you may be interested in a few of my personal observations, thoughts and experiences with our native Ericaceae under cultivation.

The Garden is between 134 and 156 m (440 - 510 feet) above sea level and lies within 6.5 kl. (four miles) of the Atlantic Ocean. Its climate is greatly influenced by this close proximity to the sea and generally speaking, the Garden experiences mild winters and cool summers. Sea ice consolidating near the coast in conjunction with numerous icebergs drifting southwards, effectively retards our spring and shortens the vegetative growing season. We have a moisture surplus of approximately 103 cm. (40 inches). The major climatic problems we experience are a lack of degree days, frequent high winds, an unreliable snow cover and the frequent alternation of freezing and thawing temperatures from November until June.

Since most of our provinces' earth was carried away and dumped well out to sea, on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, by past glaciers, the bones of our land are often seen pushing through a thin skin of gritty, nutrient poor soil. The chronic shortage of good quality, well-structured soil is an ancient and ongoing problem.

It was because of these factors, or limitations, that we decided to abandon the orthodox approach and to construct our peat beds somewhat differently. For instance, we had to use a peat block that would not readily disintegrate. Rightly or wrongly, I thought that the orthodox peat block (a 30.5 cm or 12 inch cube) would prove unreliable, so we journeyed to a local peat bog and cut out blocks approximately two feet long by 15 inches wide and 15 inches deep. Because we are particularly interested in our native heaths, we did not cut off the surface vegetation for it contained such delightful plants as *Ledum groenlandicum*, *Kalmia angustifolia*, *K. polifolia*, *Rhododendron canadense* and *Chamaedaphne calyculata*. The growing roots of these and other bogland flora maintain block solidity, which is extremely important. One problem caused by not skimming off this surface vegetation, however, is that it soon grows up into thick, hedge-like formations that effectively block

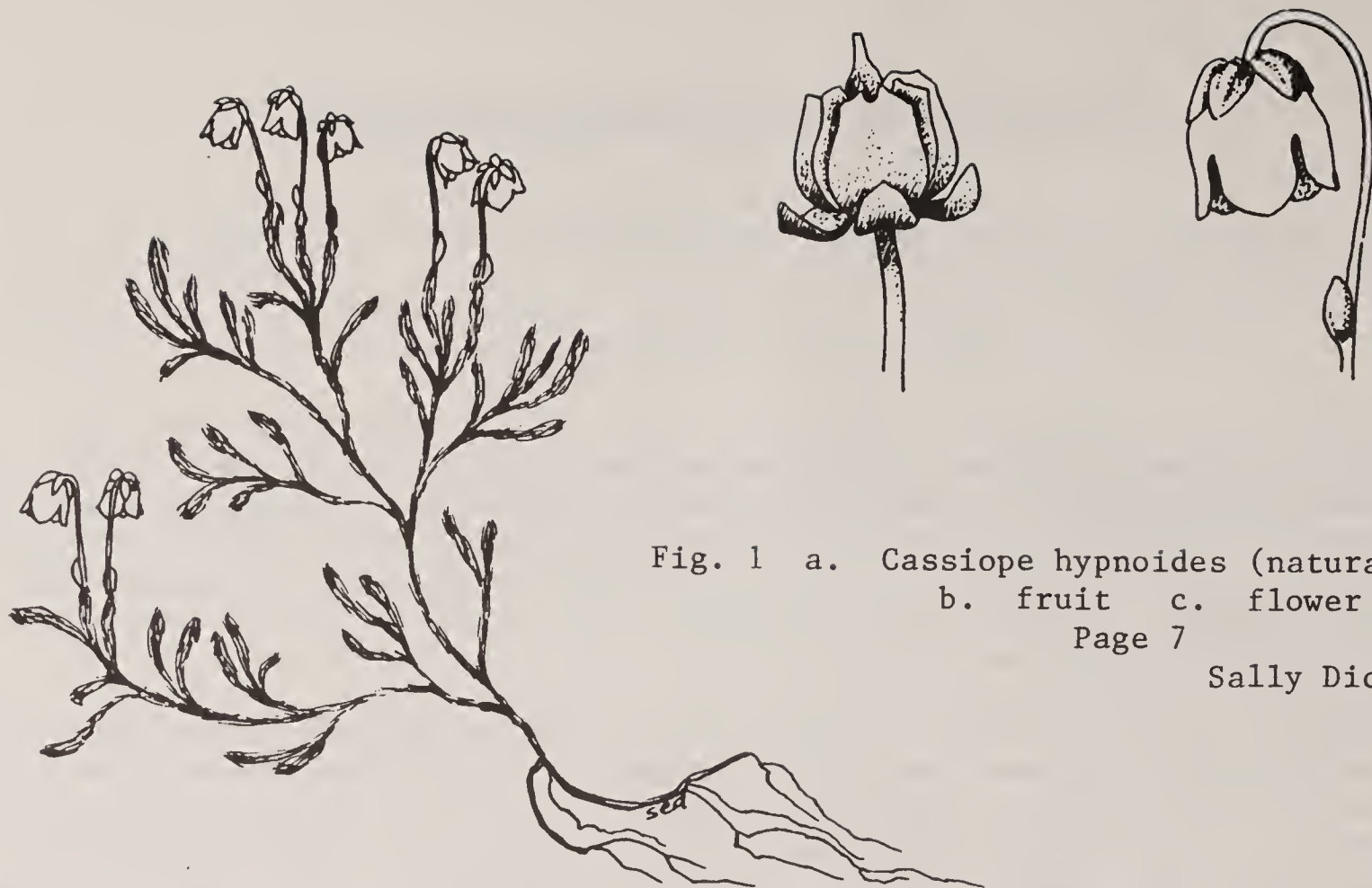
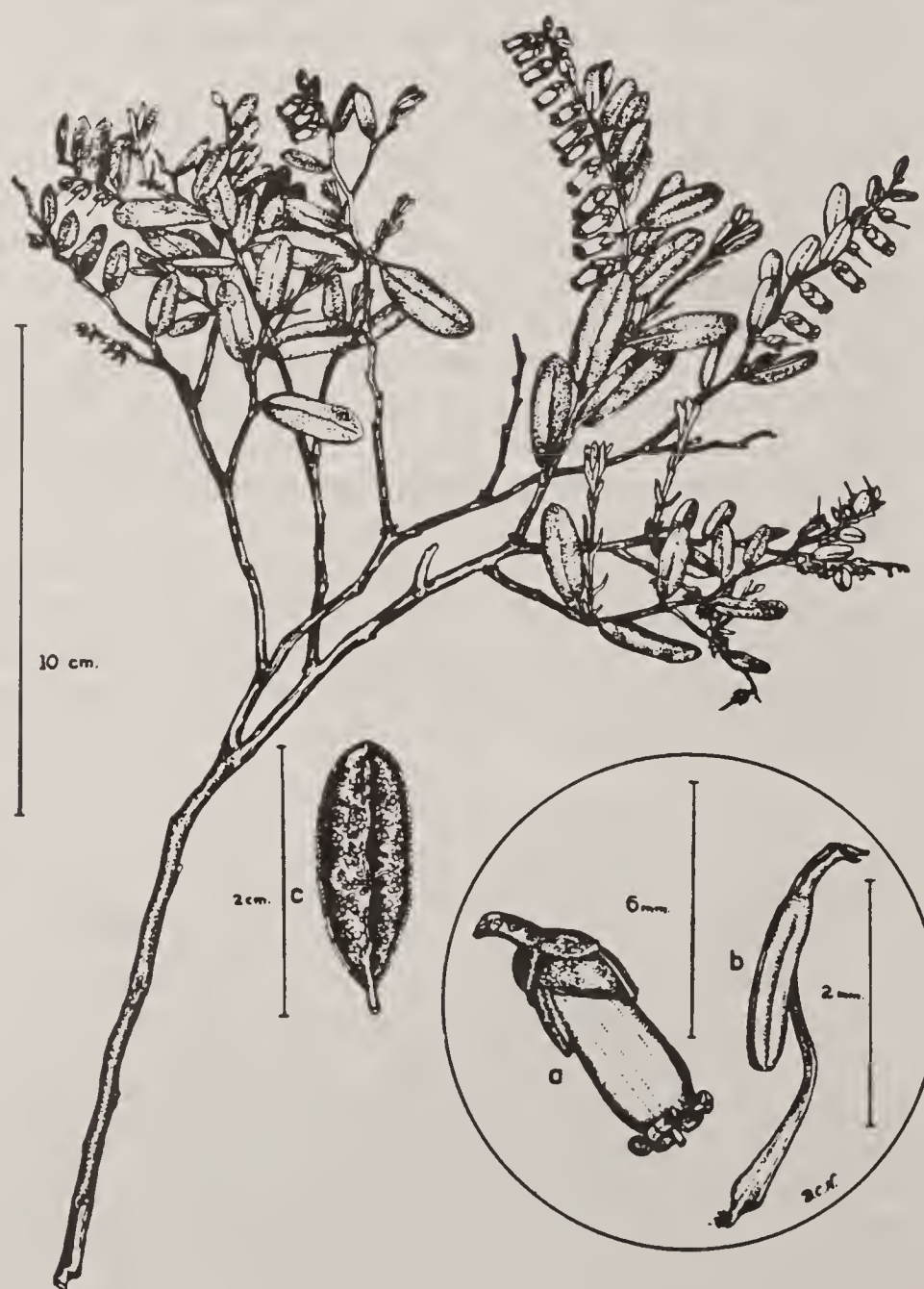


Fig. 1 a. *Cassiope hypnoides* (natural size)  
b. fruit c. flower x 4  
Page 7

Sally Dickman

Fig. 2 *Chamaedaphne calyculata*  
Natural Size  
a. single flower  
b. stamen  
c. showing lower surface of leaf

Page 5  
Betty C. Newron



Reprinted by permission from  
Heather Family of British  
Columbia, by Adam F. Szczawinski,  
British Columbia Provincial  
Museum 1962, Handbook No. 19.

An excellent reference for  
identification of Washington  
Ericaceae (Editor).



one's sight of other plants in the bed. Our answer to this has been to pick out and maintain a percentage of the better specimen plants and then to annually shear the rest of the peat walls. This produces a rather handsome green mat along the top of the peat walls. Another problem with this method is that there is too much well-established competition for any young specimen plant that the grower may want to introduce to the wall environment. This problem can be circumvented by cutting off the surface vegetation at the chosen site and replacing it with a slice of plain peat or a covering of the growing media from the backfill. One nuisance plant occurring naturally in our blocks is the Purple Chokeberry (*Aronia prunifolia*), for though it is a handsome little shrub in its own right, its thick, wire-like roots will take over the growing media behind the walls (the backfill) at an alarming rate.

Our growing media is considered somewhat unorthodox because we do not use any "soil" whatsoever in it. The first mixture we tried was 50-50 shredded peat and coarse, sharp sand with a little well-decomposed leaf mold incorporated into the top three inches. Though too frugal for many peat bed plants, it nevertheless appears perfectly satisfactory for native Ericaceae. Indeed, I have yet to see a specimen of *Loiseleuria procumbens* in the wild that could compete with the amount of bloom and general overall appearance of the one in our bed. Granted ours has two to three feet of mix beneath it, in comparison to the thin skin of gritty soil the wild plants usually have to make do with.

We have, until fairly recently, been fertilizing with a very light dusting of a complete commercial fertilizer with a nonlimestone base. We have also been top dressing with a thin covering of well-rotted maple leaf mold. Now we are experimenting with a top dressing of half and half, sieved leaf mold and commercially composted sheep manure. This top dressing is particularly useful for working in amongst the leaves and twigs of prostrate species such as *Epigaea repens*, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, *A. alpina*, *Vaccinium uliginosum*, and *V. macrocarpon*. The latter, though inclined to be straggling, is lovely in the fall with its tiny red leaves and huge red fruits.

Another, somewhat unorthodox feature of our peat beds is a lack of suitable shade. Actually, we did start out with shade in the form of some large Balsam Fir and Black Spruce trees, but unfortunately, these shallow-rooted trees were flattened by a particularly savage storm. It will take some years to replace this shade. Most of our native Ericaceae are dwellers of open heath and boglands, so a lack of shade is not too significant to most of them. The exceptions include *Phyllodoce caerulea*, *Cassiope hypnoides* and *Gaultheria hispidula*. The latter plant is very common in the wild area of the garden and has a strong affinity to mossy, shaded areas with a cool, dampish atmosphere. It languishes rapidly if exposed to dry, sunny conditions. *G. procumbens* is extremely rare in Newfoundland. Personally, I have yet to see it growing wild here. We have a small plant from the nearby French Islands of St. Pierre et Miquelon but this too, as far as I can see, will require more shade in order to thrive. We have *Epigaea repens* growing both in and out of shade. The plant in the shade maintains deep green leaves and a loose habit, yet it does not flower a quarter as well as the three plants we have in full light, which, incidentally, have a more compact habit but paler leaves. The latter plants were collected from an open site which was interesting in itself, since this plant is usually found in heavy shade in Newfoundland.

Some of our native *Ericaceae* are thin, scraggy plants when seen in the wild. This is due mainly, I think, to their reaching skywards amongst the dense competition surrounding them. If such plants are collected from the wild, they can be sheared down to ground level once they have settled into their new site. This usually makes them bush out considerably, with the resulting specimen being far superior. This treatment will often improve a plant of *Kalmia polifolia* or *Andromeda glaucophylla*. Though we have *A. polifolia grandiflora compacta* from the trade, we have not yet collected *A. polifolia* from our native gene pool. It does not occur on the island but inhabits the Labrador section of our province. So too does our Northern Labrador Tea (*Ledum decumbens* Syn: *L. palustre* var *decumbens*), a much dwarfer version of our common *L. groenlandicum*.

Our own native azalea *Rhododendron canadense* is a pretty thing, colouring our countryside in June with many shades of purple. The smaller, evergreen *R. lapponicum* is quite rare. It has responded well to the deep mixture of our peat bed.

I am rather fond of our native Huckleberries (*Gaylussacia dumosa* and *G. baccata*), which I occasionally see on our boglands. We have not brought these plants into cultivation as yet but certainly must do so in the not too distant future.

When considering the cultivation and propagation of our native *Ericaceae*, we are particularly interested in obtaining stock only from our own gene pool. We are also interested in hunting for and discovering any unusual forms that may be present in our countryside. Unfortunately, due to the overall poor economic situation, a concerted effort along this line will have to await better times. In the meantime, we will be keeping a watchful eye open during the course of our more general travels.

Last year one of our staff discovered a fine intermediate colour phase of *Kalmia angustifolia*, whilst collecting rocks for our rock garden. It is between the normal deep pink and the rare pure white, which, incidentally, I have never seen, although it is reported from our island. We have a lovely pure white Bog Laurel (*Kalmia polifolia* forma *leucantha*) found by a friend whilst out trout fishing in the wilderness. I have, at last, found and brought into cultivation our wild white Rhodora (*Rhododendron canadense* forma *albiflorum*). After 25 years of looking, it was discovered, of all places, at the site of a new garbage dump within 10 miles of the garden!

We do not, of course, believe in going forth and eliminating the natural stations of our indigenous flora. We have now undertaken a program of propagating our native *Ericaceae* from seed and cuttings collected in the wild or, from live specimens in our peat beds that originated in the wild. Since Newfoundland soil hosts the golden nematode and so cannot be allowed out of the island, we are experimenting with propagation in soilless mixes. This will eventually allow us to more readily exchange plants with other botanical gardens and enthusiasts. The Newfoundland gene pool, has, I think, much to offer the serious grower of *Ericaceae*.





# Candle Pruning Pines

David Barnhill, Marysville, Washington

One of the most distinctive features of Japanese-style gardens is their pine trees. It is not the type of pines involved; the Japanese black, red, and white pines (*Pinus thunbergii*, *P. densiflora*, *P. parviflora*) are grown in many types of gardens. What we find so unique and captivating about pines in Japanese-style gardens is the way they have been trained.

There are many aspects to Japanese-style tree training, including needle removal, thinning, and branch wiring. Possibly the most important technique is candle pruning, the primary way to control the amount of the pine's growth. The basic procedure is quite simple.

Pines grow from candles which form at the ends of last year's growth. These candles emerge in clusters with the center candle being the largest. As the growing season progresses, the central candle becomes the extension growth of the branch or trunk, and the other candles become shorter side branches.

Candle pruning should be done in late spring, after the candles have elongated, but before they have begun to form needles. By pruning the candles then instead of pruning the newly formed branches later, you are saving yourself work, saving the tree wounds, and retaining more control over where the plant's energy goes.

Fig. 3

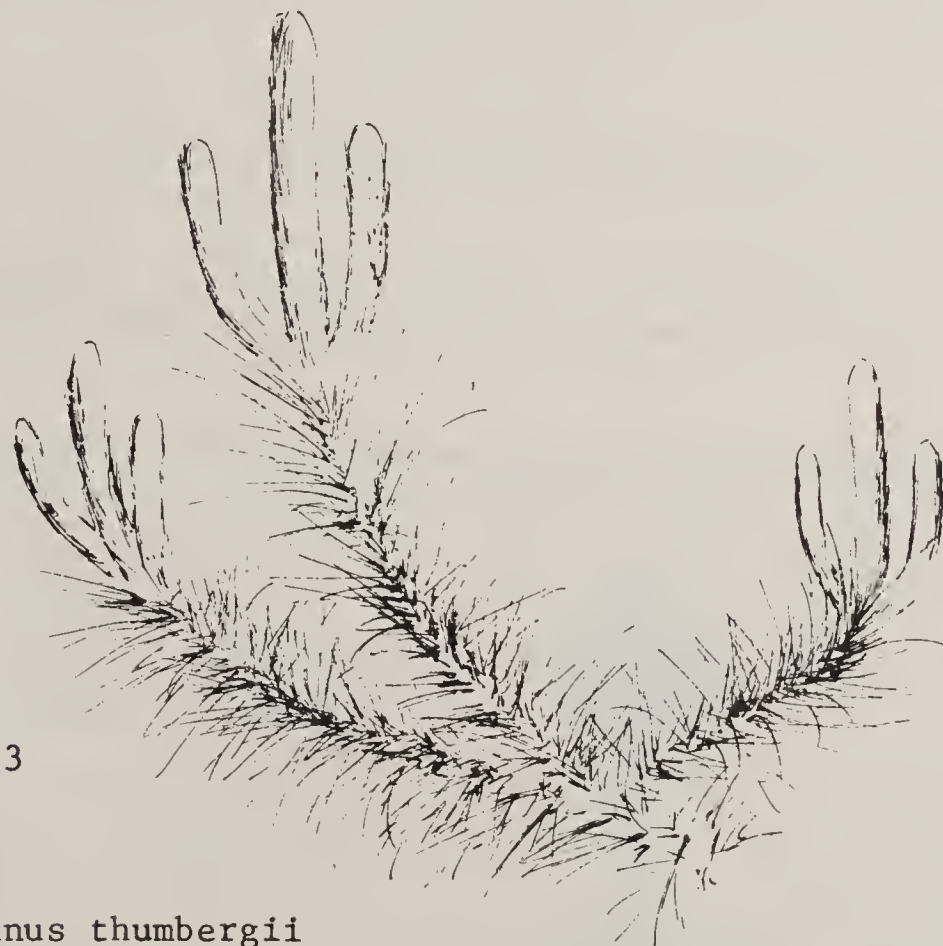


Illustration: *Pinus thunbergii*  
Young candles

Michael Moshier

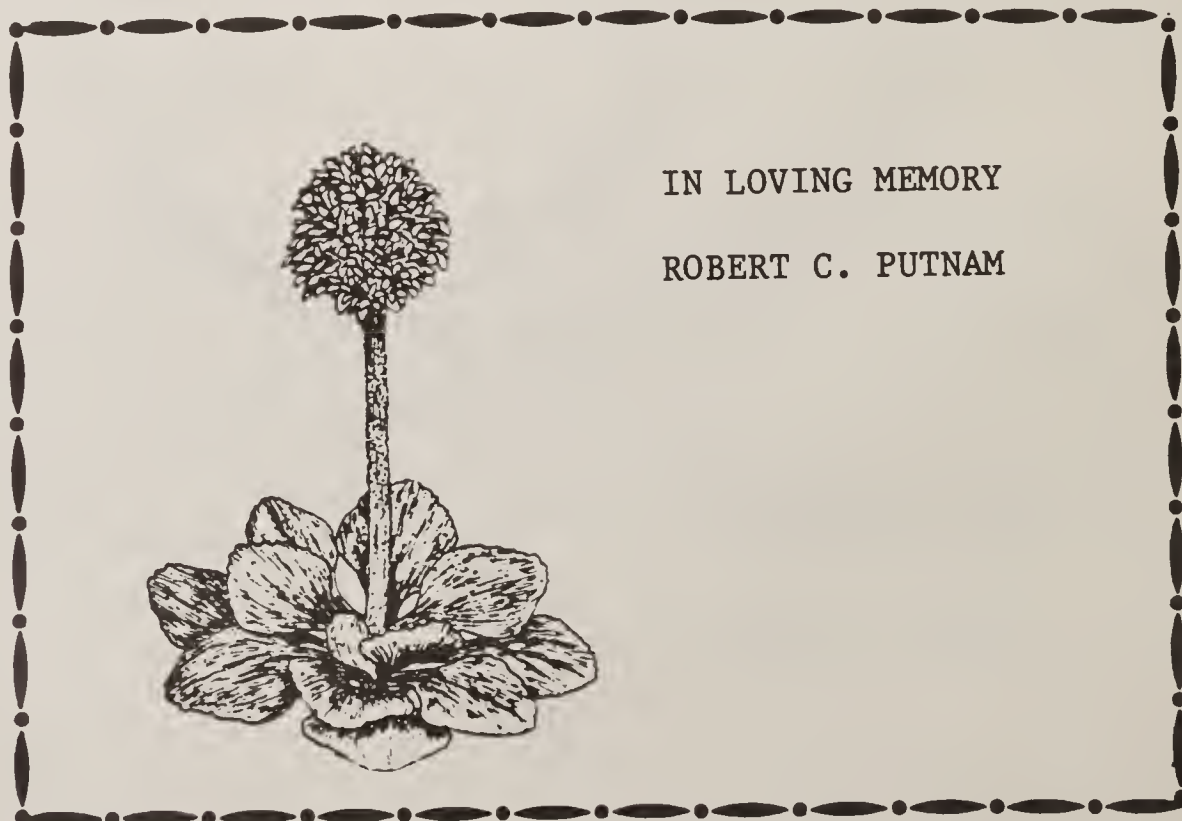
There are various options open to the pruner depending on how the tree needs to be controlled. If you want to slow the overall growth, break or cut all the candles by one-third to one-half. The result is a shortening of all of the branches that will emerge from the needle cluster. (As in the case of *Rhododendron* seed capsules, it is often easy to break off the needles with your thumb and fingers, which is preferable to cutting them with a pruner.)

If the tree has reached the size you desire and you want to stop all extension growth, remove entirely the central candle. Since only the side candles will grow, the result will be a cluster of short side branches. These small branches, pointing in various directions, provide the fullness in the branch layers that is distinctive to the Japanese-style of training. The side candles can be left unpruned if the branches they produce are not too long. Otherwise they can be broken or cut by one-third or one-half.

Occasionally you will want to remove entirely some of the side candles. This is especially true of candles that point downward or straight up. The Japanese prize an open horizontality in their pines, and the branches are trained in tiers with spaces in between. By removing the candles that point downward or directly upward, you create this layered appearance.

The area where it is most difficult to create a natural appearance is the top of the pine. Sometimes you see a pine that looks like five feet has been lopped off its top--and possibly it has been. To avoid the "beheaded" look, you need to plan ahead. When the tree is about one foot from the height you want it to be, remove all central candles around the top of the tree and break all the side candles by one-third to one-half. If you do this for several years, you will have a dense rounded crown of very short branches. You can thin and direct the growth of these branches to create the form you want.

If you prune your pine's candles every year, especially in conjunction with needle removal, proper thinning, and branch wiring, you will achieve a remarkable degree of control over its size and shape. How you control it, the aesthetic design of the tree, is of course, another, more difficult subject. Studying pines in Japanese-style gardens, classes or consultations from an expert, and good old trial and error will provide many insights into the art of Japanese-style tree training.





N.O.H.S. NOTES

Spring 1984

Supplement to the Horticulture Northwest  
Shirley Gorman, Editor

Annual Meeting Notice for N.O.H.S. Journal

The Northwest Ornamental Horticultural Society is planning an exciting double feature on May 22, 1984 at 10:30 a.m. at the Museum of History and Industry. For the first time, we are combining one of our outstanding lectures with our Annual Meeting.

The program begins at 10:30 when Dr. Peter Valder of Australia will speak and show slides on the extraordinary flora of Australia as part of our 1984 lecture series Life With Flowers. The lecture will be followed immediately by our second feature, the 18th Annual Meeting of the N.O.H.S. The short business meeting will convene at 11:30 for the election of new officers and members of the Board of Directors, short reports, By-Laws changes and any other business that may be introduced.

Following the meeting, we hope you will join us for a complimentary wine and cheese event. It promises to be an interesting and entertaining morning, and we look forward to seeing you there.

REMEMBER THE AGENDA

10:30 Dr. Valder's Lecture

11:30 18th Annual Meeting

12:00 Complimentary Wine and Cheese



Membership Application  
NORTHWEST ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Policy:

To give financial support to the University of Washington Arboreta program and to other horticultural education endeavors.

Membership activities encompass:

Lecture Series, Study Groups, Annual Fern and Plant Sales, Tours of gardens of horticultural interest, Horticultural Journal.

(Please fill in form as you wish information to appear in yearbook.)

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N.O.H.S. SPRING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 25 - May 30  
Every Wednesday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
and Sundays, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.  
Weyerhaeuser Corporate  
Headquarters Campus  
2525 South 336th  
Federal Way, Washington  
\$2.00 to Non-Members

Rhododendron Species Foundation  
"Garden Blooming Species Walks"  
Plants raised in the garden will be  
for sale. Staff will be available  
for assistance. Information:  
Barbara Mate, 927-6960.

April 3, 10, and 17  
Tuesdays  
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
Arboretum Classroom  
\$27.50

Urban/Arboretum Courses  
Urban Trees; Marvin Black  
Seattle City Arborist

April 5  
Thursday  
10 a.m.  
\$5.00

N.O.H.S. Garden Tour of  
Rhododendron Hybridizers  
Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Baird's  
"Burnaby" Remit \$5.00 check to:  
Mrs. James R. Scott  
9103 Lake Washington Blvd. N.E.  
Bellevue, Washington 98004

April 11  
Wednesday  
10 a.m.  
Arboretum Classroom  
Reservation Required  
543-8800

Urban Horticulture Lecture  
"Choice Plant Materials"  
Plant Sale Preview by Lee Clarke

April 18  
Wednesday  
8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
\$25.00  
543-8800

Urban Horticulture Arboretum Course  
Skagit Valley Flower Tour  
Dr. John Wott and Van Bobbitt

May 9  
Wednesday  
10 a.m.  
Headquarters Building  
Center for Urban Horticulture

Urban Horticulture Lecture Series  
"Bamboo, the Woody Grass"  
by Daphne Lewis, President of the  
Northwest Chapter of American Bamboo



N.O.H.S. SPRING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(Continued)

May 10  
Thursday  
10 a.m.  
\$5.00

N.O.H.S. Garden Tour  
Collector's Garden of Mr. and Mrs.  
Philip Duryee. Remit \$5.00 check to:  
Mrs. James R. Scott  
9103 Lake Washington Blvd. N.E.  
Bellevue, Washington 98004

May 12  
Saturday  
1 p.m. - 5 p.m.  
\$15.00  
543-8800

Magnolia Garden Tour  
Robert Glenn Hurt, Landscape  
Architect

May 22  
Tuesday  
10:30 a.m.  
Museum of History & Industry  
Annual Meeting to Follow Dr.  
Valder's Lecture

N.O.H.S. Lecture Series  
"The Extraordinary Flora of Australia"  
Dr. Peter Valder, Senior Lecturer  
Department of Botany  
University of Australia, Sydney

June 20  
Wednesday  
10 a.m.

Urban Horticulture Arboretum Lecture  
Series, "A Colonist's Look at British  
Horticulture" Dr. John Wott,  
Professor, University of Washington  
Center for Urban Horticulture  
Headquarters Building

June 23 and 30  
Saturdays  
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
\$20.00  
543-8800

Urban Horticulture Arboretum Courses  
Summer Running Basic Techniques  
Chico Narro

Looking Ahead:

April 30 - May 20

Rhododendron Species Foundation Tour  
of Japan. For information call:  
838-4646

May 27 - May 31

American Iris Society National  
Convention. For more information,  
contact Sigrid Asmus, 4009 - 24th  
Avenue West, Seattle, Washington  
98199

# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

BABBLING BROOKS NURSERY (Walter Brooks)	941-3854	LEE, Mike	
29814 - 11th Ave. S.W., Federal Way, WA	98003	Route #5, Box 51, Vashon, WA	98070
BARNHILL, David	652-9733	LIBONATI-BARNES, Susan	545-7494
13212 - 30th Ave. N.W., Marysville, WA	98270	Editor for Arboretum Bulletin, University of	
BULFIN, Kathi Doering	784-3251	Washington Arboretum, XD-10, Seattle, WA	98195
5841 - 4th Ave. N.W., Seattle, WA	98107	MARTIN, Ms. Margaret C.	525-7441
CONNELLY, Mrs. Bruce (Catherine)	323-1942	4208 N.E. 74th, Seattle, WA	98115
3825 E. Highland Dr., Seattle, WA	98112	MENDELSON, Ms. Kathy	827-9019
CURTIS, Jeff		11505 N.E. 100th St., Kirkland, WA	98033
22008 Brier Road, Brier, WA	98036	NIENABER GARDENS	668-4592/455-9881
EASTBURG, Miss Cheryl		Mr. and Mrs. Mike Nienaber, (Sue)	
600 West Olympic Place, Seattle, WA	98119	17405 Broadway, Snohomish, WA	98290
GRAND RIDGE NURSERY	392-1896	ORIAN, Elizabeth N.	364-5743
(Steve Doonan & Phil Pearson)		5130 N.E. 180th, Seattle, WA	98155
27801 S.E. Highpoint Way, Issaquah, WA	98027	RAY, Pete	
GRAY, Ms. Carol Ann	284-6736	Route #5, Box 51, Vashon, WA	98070
3321 - 36th Ave. W., Seattle, WA	98199	REDDY'S GREENHOUSES (Mary R. Reddy)	455-9706
GREELEY, Helen N.	824-9618	12601 S.E. 4th Place, Bellevue, WA	98005
24707 - 12th Ave. S., Kent, WA	98032	RODDA & SONS LANDSCAPING (Barry & Jan Rodda)	242-6063
GREEN, Mr. and Mrs. Joshua III (Pamela)	324-1155	644 S. 168th, Seattle, WA	98148
1932 Blenheim Dr. E., Seattle, WA	98112	STEVENSON, Kay	633-4397
HOPKINS-KUNKLE, Mrs. Kristy	789-6117	6047 - 37th N.E., Seattle, WA	98115
6535 Sycamore Ave. N.W., Seattle, WA	98117	THUOTTE, Mrs. Laura	862-9053
JACKETS, J. A. (Rodgaleen)		25203 - 112th E., Buckley, WA	98321
Route 2, Box 324A, Otis, OR	97368	WHITE, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn D. (Carolyn)	285-0225
JOHNSON, Ms. Nora	883-6672	164 Ward St., Seattle, WA	98109
17310 N.E. 45th, #121, Redmond, WA	98052	YARGER, Daniel R.	363-5698
LARSON, Phyllis	255-8827	10821 - 24th Ave. N.E., Seattle, WA	98125
13610 S.E. 141st St., Renton, WA	98056		



# Effective Color for Your Yard

Mark Houser, Everett, Washington

Here in the grow-anything Northwest we can create tree and shrub borders which rival the color spectacles of annual and perennial gardens. Unlike the purely herbaceous border, permanent plants offer an attractive winter aspect and require less digging, fussing, replacing. Such plantings improve the gardener's serenity, for they are more resistant to marauding mutts and less delectable to Ugh the Slug.

The goal is simple: combine trees and shrubs of different colors which bloom at the same time. Season to taste with bulbs and perennials, especially those found reasonably slug-proof. Paint a tableau just on the refined side of lurid. Give the old grounds an element of surprise as permanent lumps of green and brown erupt in color explosions. Then hint to the jealous neighbors you just "threw a few things together".

Some of you seek a more subdued landscape. The author would share your preference if our climate matched the tropical brightness of Miami or San Diego. By using color lavishly we offset the gloom induced by too many days of wet, clouds, cold. The author, who has many opinions as he has weeds, believes that massing a limited variety of trees and shrubs can strike a balance between two extremes. Some yards are indifferent lumps of juniper and laurel, sterile except for the odd rhododendron. Others have become overgrown horticultural zoos, the collector mentality leading us to Camp Runamuck. Especially in today's smaller yards is there a need for precision and discipline and open spaces.

City dwellers, read on. With so many scaled-down varieties of familiar species now available, a tree and shrub spectacle becomes plausible even in our fence-to-shoulder urban living. Our own modest garden features a late March and early April duet played by *Magnolia stellata* 'Royal Star' and *Camellia japonica* 'Glen 40', set off with *Muscari* 'Blue Spike' and a few tulips. Both shrubs grow slowly.

Not much space is used when the red-leaved Japanese Maple is given a colorful mulch of the long-flowering *viola cornuta* and displayed near a variegated euonymus or a small golden *chamaecyparis*. A city gardener could use the dwarf cherry 'Hally Jolivette' in combination with a small red *Rhododendron* such as 'Scarlet Wonder' or 'Fireman Jeff', or with the totally lurid purple azalea 'Blue Danube'. The familiar golden-chain tree, *Laburnum x vossii*, has a small weeping form which may complement the late flowering orange azalea 'Waco' and the blue gromwell, *Lithospermum diffusum*. Another creative idea for landscaping has been suggested in these pages by Mr. Kendall W. Gambrill. Use the larger species of *Rhododendron* as specimen plants in place of small trees or large shrubs such as lilacs, he urged. An urban setting may provide these beauties with the needed shelter.

Each composition will be an original color portrait reflecting the gardener's own personality and creativity. By allocating different portions of your yard to different weeks or months in the floral calendar, you can open a gallery of color. In a lawned setting you could even borrow the "island bed" technique Allan Bloom developed for perennials.

Bringing off a unified blooming period for different plants can be frustrated by the weather; 1983 will be remembered locally as the year spring came early, summer skipped the party, and gardeners got humbled. Different sun exposures will delay or advance the blooming times. Some plants are just plain flighty. We have tried and failed to match blue and white colors with *Berberis darwinii*, a wild mustang of a shrub whose glowing orange flowers may percolate any time between early March and early May. *Kalmia latifolia*, on the other hand, is reliable and refined. Once installed in its flowering station, the mountain laurel becomes a permanent salute to the gardener's good taste.

### Starting Out and Taking Out

Neither good taste nor common sense were present when we began renovating our Everett, Washington, garden in 1977. Let's revisit this horticultural house of horrors. Spreading juniper had been placed directly adjacent to the lawn. Large trees blocked the view of Port Gardner Bay. On a searing south wall were azaleas, rhododendron, pieris. Dominating a small flower bed and background rock garden were two large plum trees. An orange azalea mollis fronted the magenta Rhododendron 'Cynthia'. Worst of all was a tree and shrub bed which a greedy nurseryman had crammed with enough plants to decorate a city park. Soon we developed a renovation strategy which may work for you: "When in doubt, take it out."

Frequent visits to local gardens, the nurseries, and the UW Arboretum will help us know what blooms when. Asking advice will improve your garden and your friendships. Garden books, alas, can be frustrating. Very few tree and shrub books list plants in chronological order of bloom. Confronted by alphabet anxiety, we wonder if that nice white *Magnolia loebneri* blooms in concert with the red Rhododendron 'Vulcan' (No, but try 'Elizabeth'). Other books are written for a continental climate. The lovely golden-rain tree, *Koelreuteria paniculata*, is sometimes said to flower in 'late spring'. In western Washington it waits until mid to late July and combines with blue and white hydrangeas.

Take hope. There are a number of reference guides which do a good job in listing the blooming period. The best of the lot, and one of the most useful tracts ever written, is the 1951 English volume, Effective Flowering Shrubs, by Michael Haworth-Booth. Not only does the book have a separate chapter for each time period, but Haworth-Booth attempts to list the order of bloom within each month. Effective Flowering Shrubs suggests possible plant combinations, and it deals extensively with flowering trees. It even gives a chronology of rhododendron species.

### Maximum Color in Minimum Space

To achieve maximum color in a minimum space, Haworth-Booth recommends two planting schemes which may be familiar to you. The "stepladder" method has a flowering tree planted above shrubs, and bulbs and perennials are mixed with or below shrubs. We used this scheme for a June portrait featuring the snowbell tree *Styrax japonica* above five *Kalmia* 'Ostbo Red' and fronted with *Lithospermum diffusum* and *Iris sibirica*. Since June often lacks tree and shrub color, the artist-gardener could bring off this same effect using *Cornus kousa* with *Kalmia* or with late-flowering evergreen azaleas such as 'Macrantha' or the new North Tisbury Hybrids. *Potentilla* varieties including the ground cover *P. verna* would contribute yellow.



A second method is also familiar. Small, non-invasive evergreens are massed in a sunny alpine lawn or fairly level rock garden. Here we may need a personal computer, since smaller plants bring larger options. Not only can we use small alpine rhododendrons and azaleas, but we may also deploy evergreen perennials such as iberis, dianthus, heuchera. In a larger space, we can extend the blooming season with heaths, heathers, helianthemum, and hebe. Whew! Then consider your choices among the small bulbs.

Why, I wondered, did my initial effort at massing low evergreens look unsatisfactory? Answer: lack of contrast in foliage color and texture. Although deciduous trees and shrubs were nearby, we found the carpet improved by adding the new dwarf Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Nana Lutea', Berberis 'Crimson Pygmy', and the slightly obscure Abies lasiocarpa 'Glauca Compacta', a small silvery conifer. A substitute here might be Picea pungens 'R. H. Montgomery', planted with prayers against the spruce aphid invasion so evident these days. The herb Artemisia 'Silver Mound' may work for you, but mine was savaged by the starlings. An excellent reference for plants with colored leaves is the readily available 1978 British title, The Complete Book of Gardening, edited by Michael Wright.

As a companion or background shrub for small evergreens, consider the single-flowered Kerria japonica, and prune it hard after flowering. In the single-flowered form we have a refined bramble whose foliage and bight yellow flowers contrast nicely with alpine rhododendrons such as the purple Rhododendron impeditum, the yellow 'Curlew', and reds such as 'Martha Robbins'. The dwarf reds are sometimes difficult to keep straight in sun exposures and in flowering time. A background tree for this scheme might be one of the white cherries such as Prunus 'Shirotae' or Magnolia soulangeana 'Alba'. The crabapple family, Malus, has small cultivars which could be used here.

Because our local climate usually escapes the late frosts found in Great Britain, using English references may be assisted if you advance the listed blooming dates by two weeks. This applies mainly to trees and shrubs which bloom in March, April and early May.

We like the 1982 Hillier Color Dictionary of Trees and Shrubs. What it lacks in specific information about blooming times it more than makes up with 600 color photos. Another favorite English guide is the heavy Reader's Digest Encyclopedia of Garden Plants and Flowers, a 1971 megabook which does a fine job in giving the of bloom.

In 1980 the American Rhododendron Society published American Rhododendron Hybrids, a paperback which categorizes the plants by size, color and blooming period. Even more indispensable because it also lists the species is the recent Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons, or Greer Cardens' superb annual sales catalogue. We salute Mr. Greer for his efforts to end cultivar confusion. Recently we used his advice to add Rhododendron 'Buttermint' to an existing evergreen azalea planting R. 'Hexe' (red) and R. 'Everest' (white).

Turning from shrubs to perennials, we find the garden books more reliable and specific. Highly recommended is Gardening With Perennials, Month By Month, by Joseph Hudak, 1976. This exhaustive volume devotes a separate chapter to the plants of each month, lists bulbs, and further categorizes the plants according to the colors of each month. Complementing this guide is Low Maintenance Perennials, by Robert Hebb, 1975. Read this one if you dislike staking and dividing.

With these volumes and with others such as the *Sunset* and *Ortho* books, you can plan the color-effective tree and shrub border. Just about the only reference we lack is a list from the Extension Service of slug-proof perennials (they have a publication on strawberry root weevil and which rhododendrons are susceptible). Instead, the gardener must experiment and must face trial by teeth.

Slugs as well as humans seem to relish plants with blue flowers. Farewell, *campanula*. Goodbye, *primula*. Hard to find and then difficult to use, blue plants offer a challenge to the designer. Not only do some plants listed as 'blue' turn out to be mauve, lavender, or purple, but to be effective with other colors often requires blue to be massed. In a future article for this publication we will discuss some alternatives in true blue.

Permit me a brief word on roses. Some of you like roses, and some do not. A lady friend of ours says disdainfully that male gardeners favor 'hybrid' tea roses and giant dahlias for the same reason men admire Dolly Parton. Dominating the area in which they are planted, roses can overpower and diminish flowering trees and shrubs which bloom at the same time. We learned this the hard way with *potentilla* and *escallonia*. Roses, however, do associate very well with *clematis*. Our own yard has a small planting of the floribundas *Rosa* 'Charisma' (orange red) and *R.* 'Sunsprite' (deep yellow, highly fragrant) backed with the common *Clematis* 'Jackmanii' in bright purple. It works. Perennials nearby should have large and/or bright flowers: iris, shasta daisy, coreopsis, etc. For compressed color the taller sorts of lilies look well planted among roses, and the bushes help conceal the flower stalks.

In many gardens, coordinated color can be easy. Just list carefully the color and blooming time of existing plants, then add others for complement or for contrast. Transplanting may come into play. Your color composition should be framed by space left over; few art galleries display paintings jammed together. Trying for united color will also bring trying mistakes. I have made plenty. Fear not. Most shrubs are portable, awaiting only another inspiration. Several years ago we huffed and puffed seven twelve-year-old azaleas into new flowering stations. Painting a tableau of color is a never-quite-finished adventure in which the garden muralist can view hits and misses with a smile and say, "That's show biz".

\* \* \* \* \*

Effective Flowering Shrubs, Michael Haworth-Booth, Thomas Crowell Company, 1951.

The Hillier Color Dictionary of Trees and Shrubs, Harold Hillier, Van Ostrand Reinhold Company, 1982.

The Reader's Digest Encyclopedia of Garden Plants and Flowers, Reader's Digest Association of London, 1971.

American Rhododendron Hybrids, American Rhododendron Society, 1980.

Greer's Guidebook To Available Rhododendrons, Harold E. Greer, 1982.

Low Maintenance Perennials, Robert S. Hebb, New York Times Book Company, 1975.

Gardening With Perennials, Month by Month, Joseph Hudak, New York Times Book Company (also known as Quadrangle Press), 1976.

The Complete Book of Gardening, edited by Michael Wright, Warner Books, 1980.

(This extremely useful guide is the English equivalent of our *Sunset New Western Garden Book*. Illustrated, with excellent materials on landscaping, perennials, colored leaves, rock gardens).



# NOHS Nursery Snooper

## GRANDRIDGE NURSERY AND POTTERY

Pat Bender, Seattle, Washington

Northwest alpine gardeners are doubly fortunate; not only have we easy access to Grandridge Nursery's superbly grown plants but also their extraordinary pots. To see their saxifrages happily blooming in an exquisite pot is almost more than a mortal gardener can handle. To enlighten those of us who have always wondered how (and why) they got started with pottery, we wandered out to the nursery on a chilly autumn day to interview Phil Pearson and Steve Doonan.

Grand Ridge is situated on seven acres on Issaquah Creek. The nursery is beautifully kept and unusually well organized, with many innovations developed for successful alpine plant cultivation. The pottery is in an old building erected about 1918 by Phil's grandfather. It has been a garage, bunkhouse, chicken house - and now has been refurbished and converted to pottery making. Phil is the potter, and Steve, who does most of the propagation, has backed the operation financially.

Pearson and Doonan are not only kindred souls, but actual kin; their mothers were sisters. When they got out of the army in 1969 they decided to settle in this area and go into the nursery business. They drew up a five-year plan which included developing a landscape maintenance business to support them until the nursery could. The generosity of many plant growers from Canada to California, together with their many sojourns into the mountains (for seeds and cuttings, not plants) enabled them to increase their stock. But how to display these gems, particularly the saxifrages?

In 1976 they tried to find suitable pots in Japan, but although the clays were suitable, the pots were too ornate. Because of Western influence, Japanese pottery has become less of a folk art than a commercial operation. What they were looking for was a pot which combined British design with Japanese clay bodies. Since none was available here, they decided to make their own.

Phil was already something of a local Leonardo da Vinci. He has been a painter of water colors, maker of hand controlled model airplanes, teacher of gliding and soaring, and a participant in single-handed sailboat racing. He got a book on Raku pottery which had a picture of a pot in the fire, "incandescent and glowing like an agate". Thus inspired, he and Steve headed for Seattle Pottery to buy more books and materials.

Although Phil had some experience with a wheel in wood turning, he had never thrown pots. The only place he had to work was in the living room of their home, so he learned neatness in a hurry. Their kiln was a five-gallon drum lined with space age ceramic fiber insulation, large enough for one pot at a time, and able to fire up fast - up to 2,000 degrees in five minutes. This helped Phil improve his pottery skills, because a pot of uneven thickness would explode in this fast firing.

After nearly burning the house down with their kerosene kiln, they decided to build a large, outdoor kiln. They used bricks from abandoned coke ovens around Cold Creek, together with new ones from Seattle Pottery. Again they used the ceramic fiber, topped with hog wire, cement and vermiculite for weather proofing. The chimneys were from two old water tanks from the town of High Point. Fuel oil was used for firing in an old household oil burner with paint spray heads to atomize the oil. The resulting reduction flame results in a rich color and satiny texture for the pots. The kiln has about 800 hours on it as of November of 1983 (this is about 67 firings). They load and pre-heat the kiln the night before, and in the morning fire it up for about a 12-hour run. Each run consists of about 80 to 100 pots, but plans are in the works for a new, larger kiln.

It has taken five years to develop a clay body that does not crack on the bottom of the large pans during drying. They mix their own, buying the dry California fire clay from Seattle Pottery. The coarse clays are mixed with very plastic clay and various sizes of grog (a pre-fired clay that has been crushed) to cut down on shrinkage. They formerly mixed it all by hand, but with Steve's financial support they have been able to purchase a de-airing pug mill to mix and wedge the clay. Once mixed, the clay is stored in garbage cans until use so that it will age and form certain gels, and so that the moisture reaches equilibrium throughout the whole mass. Phil says that the Chinese used to mix clay for the next generation.

The Chinese methods really interest Phil, particularly the glazes. The flowering of Chinese pottery was during the Tsung Dynasty, from 600 to 900 AD. Potteries existed in many towns, producing some 20,000 pots at one firing. Because wood was used for firing, the kilns were fired at a lower temperature for about two weeks. The pots were graded according to the quality standards of the time, with the most beautiful going to the emperor. The Chinese put a high value on jade, most of which was imported. They attempted with their celadon glazes to imitate jade, and Phil has studied their methods and applied this to his own celadon glazes. As the Chinese did, Phil collects clays for glazing. He has had molecular analyses done on the clays and this, together with the published research on Chinese glazes, has enabled him to fill the gaps with local materials whenever possible.

Kitty Pearson, Phil's beautiful and charming wife, is pressing most of the square pots, using special lightweight molds developed by Phil. She also does much of the potting up of plants. Steve Doonan does most of the propagation, using many methods he has originated. (Japanese visitors were astounded by Steve's success with *Shortia* seeds and cutting - something he started when he was ten years old.) Phil and Kitty's children are equally talented: Jimmy has a butterfly collection of over a thousand specimens and Jeannie shows horses, is active in 4-H and plans to attend one of the schools of culinary arts upon her high school graduation.

The proof of the pottery's success can be seen in the reactions of happy customers. When Dr. Kochi Onoe and Mr. Kazuo Mori were here for the Portland Study Weekend in 1982 they came up to visit Grandridge. Phil and Steve showed them slides of some of their alpine plants in pots, and when a slide of *Lewisia tweedyi* in a black Grandridge pot flashed on the screen, Mr. Mori jumped up and began shouting in Japanese. Doctor Onoe explained that Mr. Mori had an identical Japanese pot at home. Understandably they left for home with Grandridge pots.



The pots have been taken back home by many visitors in the United States, Canada, Europe and the Orient. Phil and Steve do not ship, however, because of the difficulties in boxing them for shipment. They have devised a method of carrying large numbers of pots to shows, sales, and study weekends; large wooded carriers are filled with about fifty pots. Pots are removed as sold, and those left over - if any - are already packed for the trip home.

Anyone who wishes a pot - and who does not - need only pay a visit to Grandridge where the shelves are lined with vases, square and round pots, and soup bowls and coffee mugs which are dishwasher and microwave safe. The only problem is in choosing which one. There is so much variety in size, shape and glaze that most of us get the potato chip syndrome and cannot stop with just one. (In researching this article I bought a lovely gray vase with a delightful crackly glaze for a wedding present. I still have the vase and the bride got towels.) Although an appointment is not needed it is a good idea to call first. Phil and Steve are still doing landscape maintenance at condominiums several days a week, and Phil has taken up grafting of bonsai, especially Japanese black pine. Their time is at a premium, particularly as summer comes and the mountains beckon.

What everyone at Grandridge would like to see is the development of local pot shows as is done in Canada and England. We could learn from each other and challenge ourselves to produce better and better alpines. Although growing an alpine in a pot does not necessarily result in a better plant, it has many advantages in our climate. Our rainy Augusts encourage botrytis, and being able to move our plants out of the rain on humid days and during our wet winters would enable us to grow difficult alpines. With pot culture, one can change the soil, take the plant to show, or even to lunch with a friend. One can have aquatic gardens with miniature horsetail and cattails (both of which are in the NOHS sale), or water lillies. One can get the plants up and away from marauding pets and the less athletic slugs, and rotate the containers as the plants come into bloom.

If you cannot get to Grandridge for a pot, look for their display at the NOHS plant sale. Some of the plant material in the Collector's Corner is from their nursery, and with the purchase of a complimentary pot, you are on your way to Alpine Heaven.

Grandridge Nursery & Pottery  
Phil Pearson, Kitty Pearson,  
Steve Doonan, Proprietors  
27801 S.E. High Point Way  
Issaquah, Washington  
392-1896



IMPORTANT CORRECTION: Please note cover, title page and back cover, of the last issue of Horticulture Northwest, which reads "Winter 1984." It should read "Winter 1983." Please correct your copy otherwise you will have confusion when using the journal as a reference in the future. I am happy to report that a ten-year Index is in the final stages of preparation and will be mailed to all members as soon as printed. (Editor)



# Tidbits

by Ladybug



REFLECTIONS ON THE ICE AGE: A crisis concentrates the mind. When the Ice Age descended on Puget Sound in mid-December, we did an anguished mental inventory of the garden plants. Later, we realized generalizations about hardiness are like generalizations about people. There are always exceptions. In our garden which is comprised largely of trees and shrubs, frost damage was most apparent on (a) evergreen azaleas and (b) evergreens which were newly installed or were too dry when the big freeze hit. For example, an established tree of *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Samuel Sommer' was hardly affected, while a new tree planted in 1982 was scorched and bud-blasted. The same situation prevailed with differing plants of *Rhododendron* 'Golden Witt'. Later we asked the owners of Garden Valley Nursery in Woodinville if they had done anything special to protect their thousands of containerized rhododendrons. "We watered everything thoroughly before it got really cold," they replied.

Winter dessication of evergreens is not unlike the process of freeze-drying. For this reason, the standard advice -- and quite sound -- is to mulch broad-leaved evergreens and to protect them from winter sun. Not far from our Everett home is an apartment complex with a large planting of *Fatsia japonica*. Frost had blackened the sunny side of the plant, while the portion growing in the shade looked reasonably intact. We noticed sun scorch and some bud-blasting on the sunny side of a newly planted camellia in our garden. As of this writing, it was too early to assess damage to bulbs and to herbaceous plants.

The big freeze seemed to underline the old rule of thumb about evergreens: the larger the leaf, the greater the need for protection, and vice versa. *Ceanothus* and *cistus* grow naturally on sloping sunny sites with poor soil. In her book, The Small Shrub Garden, English author, Judith Berrisford, suggests *ceanothus* "will prove hardier on an exposed bank than in their more generally chosen position against a house or garden wall... generally speaking, exposure to sun and wind helps harden all small-leaved shrubs."

Our own *Ceanothus* 'Julia Phelps' grows on a sandy hillside. It was damaged but not killed. The rarest plant in our garden is the small-leaved *Eucryphia lucida*, a native of Tasmania. It was almost unscathed. The hardiness of Australasian plants will remain conjectural until gardeners have more experience with now scarce varieties of *hebe*, *hoheria*, *olearia*, and other Down Under natives.

The big freeze also prompted us to conjecture about the effect of soil composition and content on hardiness. In numerous gardening books, we can read that potash toughens plants against the rigors of disease and cold. If the readers of this publication have evidence on potash, it would be greatly welcomed.

Mark Houser





OUR CLIMATE AND YOUR GARDEN: Moderation is the byword of good living and is the norm for our Pacific Northwest climate. Extremes of heat or cold are rare, but they give us an opportunity to evaluate the stress tolerance of plants. Why is this important? It is essential to have "hands on" or "eyewitness" accounts for the simple reason that the hardiness of plants is not as well defined as leaf size and flower color, for example. Hardiness is sometimes a vague quality.

NORTICULTURE NORTHWEST would appreciate receiving readers' comments and observations as to how the December cold snap\* affected particular plants in your garden. Write us a note, give us a phone call. By contributing your own observations of your plants, you will help all local gardeners. Improving horticultural education is a basic goal of NOHS; by having your specific input, we can carry the message and improve our collective wisdom.



\*Two degrees in this North King County suburban.

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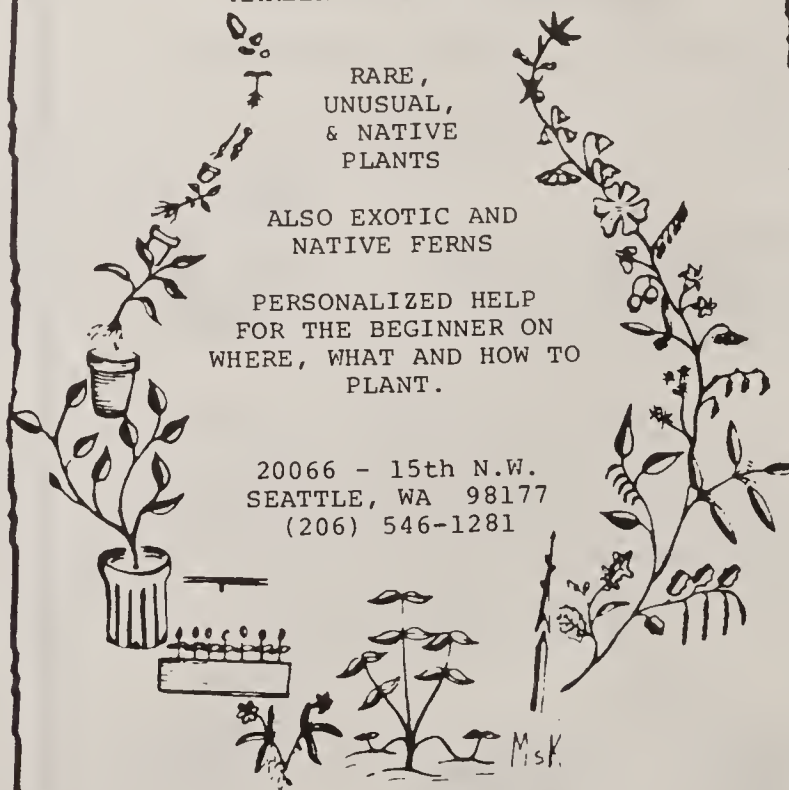
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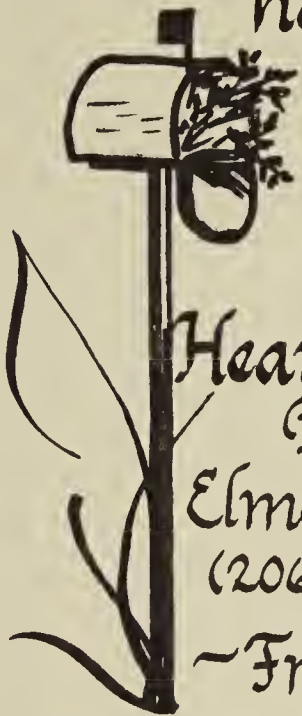
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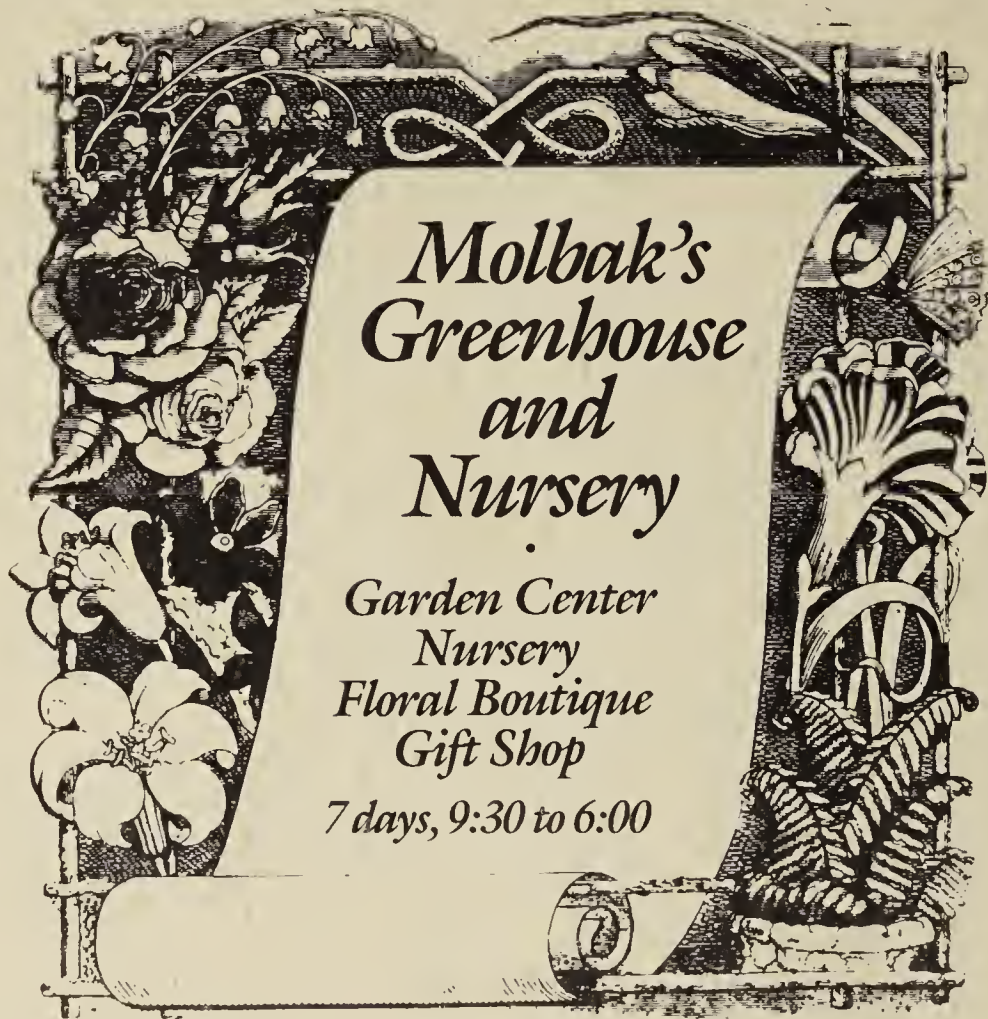
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